# THE GREAT ADVENTURE

GEORGE CABOT LODGE

## By George Cabot Lodge

THE GREAT ADVENTURE. 12mo, $1.00, *net*. Postage extra.

CAIN: A Drama. 12mo, $1.00, *net*. Postpaid, $1.09.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN AND COMPANY THE RIVERSIDE PRESS CAMBRIDGE MCMV

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*Published October 1905*

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# LIFE

OCT 1907

TO

W. S. B.

## I

Pride, power and substance of created things,
Gross, vital element of all that is,
Womb of interminable pregnancies,
Perennial source of earth's resurgent Springs —
O Life! crude matrix that forever clings
To thought's clear diamond, dark chrysalis
Big with prodigious birth, unsunned abyss
Headlong beneath the soul's Icarian wings! —
When, as my peers before me, I shall fall
Shattered with light, and, lost beyond recall,
Mix and resolve in thy creative slime, —
Thence shall I rise in endless avatars,
And still once more, for Truth's eternal stars,
Leap from the cloud-capped battlements of Time!

## II

## PRIMAVERA

Spirit immortal of mortality,
Imperishable faith, calm miracle
Of resurrection, truth no tongue can tell,
No brain conceive, — now witnessed utterly
In this new testament of earth and sea, —
To us thy gospel! Where the acorn fell
The oak-tree springs: no seed is infidel!
Once more, O Wonder, flower and field and tree
Reveal thy secret and significance! —
And we, who share unutterable things
And feel the foretaste of eternity,
Haply shall learn thy meaning and perchance
Set free the soul to lift immortal wings
And cross the frontiers of infinity.

## III

Life gives the pass-key of his treasure-house
Into our hand, saying, "What diadem,
"What gold of glory, what illustrious gem
"Man shall desire of me, shall crown his brows!"
And nothing of all man's choice Life disallows,
Whether of prized or priced or priceless things:
By the feast-tables heaped with offerings,
"Enter!" he cries to all men, "and carouse!"
And thus after our will, in greed and haste,
For certain years we choose and use and waste,
Suffer and strive: — save some few restless men
Who seek, uncrowned, unfriended, alien
And careless of the flushed festivity,
The path thro' life and death to liberty!

## IV

Unspeakable are the felicities
Of labour and long endurance for the Truth:
Love's sea at flood in the rash heart of Youth,
Freedom and spiritual ecstasies!
Incredible are the discoveries
Of Life's adventure: on the high, outcast,
Star-severed pathways Life may stand at last
Thrilled witness of the soul's divinities!
And always Night beyond! — infinite, strange,
Teeming, inviolate, where the peaks of thought,
Flushed by an unseen Dawn, superbly range
Down the long frontiers whence the restless soul,
Forward, beyond the last and best it sought,
Still finds a path, a prospect and a goal!

## V

We trod into the starlight, into the night;
The ways of our deliverance were not mild:
Long had we been contented and beguiled,
And long importunate lovers of the light.
Long had we sought and scorned the false delight
Of perishable things and things defiled,—
Reckless at last we passed unreconciled
Out thro' the darkness in all men's despite.
And much we suffered, and spent our strength and youth
On the steep paths, and lived in loneliness,
Till, as our life-blood fed the lamp of Truth,
Ruin rent down the fortress-walls of Fear,
And light was kindled in the blind, austere
Ways of the soul's eternal restlessness.

## VI

Twilight of Truth's unfettered wanderings!
Skies of supreme adventure, lightning-crossed! —
Tho', as we soar alone, perchance, and lost,
Strange ethers yield beneath our desperate wings,
The diapason of Life's singing strings,
Large as the pensive murmur of still seas,
May reach us, and of all Truth's galaxies
Haply one star console our sufferings.
We stand, at least, too far beyond to heed
The protest vacant and grandiloquent
Of timid, rich and pious men: the event
Is ours to win or lose, and ours the faith
That he who sows the Truth's immortal seed
Shall harvest in the fields of life and death!

## VII

## TUCKANUCK

I

Take me away to the sea, O carry me
Down to the sea where there is space and light,
Where stars abound in the gigantic night,
Where soul and flesh are unconstrained and free!
Carry me back! for I once more would see
The midnight sky's moon-silvered azurite,
The calm lagoon at noonday wide and white, —
Carry me down! O take me to the sea!
O take me hence to the innumerable
Deep-rumouring waters! Let me feel the core
Of life reëcho like a chambered shell
The voice and motion of the immensity!
Carry me back! — O Soul, from Life's dark shore
Take me away forever to the Sea!

II

## VIII

Powerful, patient, vast serenity
Of Nature's fathomless tranquillities:
Inviolate silence of the starlit skies,
Deep respiration of the windless sea:
There may we rear the towers of thought in thee,
Pluck forth the secret from the Sphinx's eyes,
Ransom from countless chance captivities
Man's inarticulate divinity!
There may we find the faith which dares disown
Nothing that is, the faith by which alone
We, peradventure, shall be justified;
There may the Soul go forth and there return
Or here no more, but pass from bourne to bourne,
Ever from life to life unsatisfied!

## IX

3

Shall we return, return once more and stand
There where at sunset we may thrill to see
The skies flash kindling like the noontide sea,
The birds pass seaward from the darkling land?
Shall we return and on the stainless sand
Hear, as of old, the waves' wild minstrelsy,
And feel once more the heart within us free,
The soul within us strong to understand? —
We shall return! and in the silence find
Ever the nameless peace, the calm delight,
The spacious meditations of the mind
Wherein, dilate with Truth's unfailing breath,
Our souls may witness Life's immortal light
Fill the dark chambers of the House of Death.

## X

4

There may we learn at daybreak and night-
fall,
As day and dusk and darkness cover us,
With earth and sky and the omnivorous
Infinite sea of ceaseless flood and fall, —
There may we learn how love is spiritual
And death divine and life illustrious,
There may we find at last the fabulous
Truth and compose the soul's high ritual.
There may we haply find ourselves, the goal,
Ourselves, the source of all enlightenment,
And thus discern how earth and sky and sea
And love and life and death and destiny
Are wrought of one eternal element
Quarried in dim deep strata of the Soul.

## XI

5

We loved too perfectly for praise
The spread of noon's sun-startled sea,
We loved the large tranquillity
Of flowing distances and days.
In calm, dark sunsets or the blaze
Of moonlit waves, the ecstasy
And spacious thought of liberty
Thrilled us in deep and silent ways.
We loved too much for song or speech
The stars' exalted loneliness,
And in the tacit tenderness
Of hearts thrown open each to each
We found the perfect peace that brings
A foretaste of eternal things.

## XII

6

We loved the illimitable night,
  We loved the interminable sea,
  We loved, on flower and vine and tree,
  The candid foliage wet with light.
We loved the thunder and the might
  Of mountains and ineffably
  We loved the power that made us be
  Lovers of life and life's delight.
We loved the innocent joys of earth,
  The poise and peace of natural things,
  We loved the miracle of birth;
We loved, beyond life's last release,
  The shadow as of stirless wings,
  The silence and majestic peace.

## XIII

7

We found a symbol and significance
In day by day the changed and changeless sea,
In night by night each glittering galaxy,
The cosmic pageant and extravagance.
Lost in the devious labyrinth of chance
We sought the endless thread of liberty,
And in the shadow of the Mystery
We watched for light with sleepless vigilance.
Yet still how far soever we climbed above
The nether levels, always, like a knife,
We felt the chill of fear's blind bitter breath:
For still a secret crazed the heart of Love,
An endless question blurred the eyes of Life,
A baffling silence sealed the lips of Death.

## XIV

8

How often in the tranquil evenings,
There by the kindled sea's immense unrest,
Has love, like music in the human breast,
Thrilled us with incommunicable things!
How often, as we watched the sea-birds' wings
Flash in the sunset on their homeward quest,
Have life's large secrets, by the soul confessed,
Taught us the pride and peace that freedom brings!
How often have we felt the calm of thought
Quell the storm-shaken waters of the soul,
Till, land-locked by the cliffs of Time, they caught
The silent gleam of Truth's unchanging stars,
And felt the universal ocean roll,
Muffled and vast, on Life's dissolving bars!

## XV

9

O South-wind, silvered by the crescent moon,
Breathe on my shadowed sail and carry me
Homeward across the sunset-coloured sea,
The rose and violet of the calm lagoon.
There where the high and homeless stars shall soon
Thrill the vast darkness singly, silently,
Carry me back, O South-wind, tenderly
Thro' the gold dusk of closing afternoon.
And as thou bear'st me on my homeward way,
With what few leaves of Truth's immortal wreath,
What spiritual, secret victories,
Are mine; so, homeward from life's little day,
The golden-winged, star-silvered wind of death
Shall take the soul with all its argosies.

## XVI

10

In some clear, crystalline, calm-murmuring
Midnight, or when the cloud-sierras rise
Massive and flame-swept in the sunset skies,
Or in the noonday broad and glittering,
We shall return ! The endless wind shall bring
Sea-perfumes and sea-rumours and the cries
Of scattered sea-birds, while our shrunken eyes
Grow spacious in the vast horizon's ring.
There day by day in high intelligence
Of Nature, we shall learn her parable;
We shall explore thought's wide circumference;
We shall return at last ! and find the soul,
By indications untransmissible,
Always the stedfast centre and the goal !

## XVII

## ODYSSEUS

He strove with Gods and men in equal mood
Of great endurance: not alone his hands
Wrought in wild seas and laboured in strange lands,
And not alone his patient strength withstood
The clashing cliffs and Circe's perilous sands:
Eager of some imperishable good
He drave new pathways thro' the trackless flood
Foreguarded, fearless, free from Fate's commands.
How shall our faith discern the truth he sought? —
We too must watch and wander till our eyes,
Turned sky-ward from the topmost tower of thought,
Haply shall find the star that marked his goal,
The watch-fire of transcendent liberties
Lighting the endless spaces of the soul.

## XVIII

## KALYPSO

Sorceress of his charmed captivity,
Of all love's gifts she was munificent;
Yet was he unpersuaded to content
Incurious of love's warm felicity,
Fain of departure on the treacherous sea:
Heedless he was whether his life were spent
In shipwreck on the cruel element,
So he were homeward bound, so he were free!
And even as he adventured life and cast
Pleasure and passion from his home-sick heart,
Still, tho' in exile, mindful of his goal;
So, after long enslavements, we, at last
Reckless and undissuaded, shall depart,
Free and bound outward, homeward to the soul!

## XIX

### MAXIM GORKY

My love is with thee and with Liberty!
The self-same human offal, — Czar and priest,
Coward and liar, idiot and beast, —
The self-same men slew Jesus who slay thee!
But now, despite their sly ferocity,
The hounds of justice by thy hand released
Howl in the swinish middle of their feast,
And fear appals them of their destiny!
For we, Lovers and Liberators, we,
God-less and law-less Saviours who reclaim
Men from the reverence of power and name, —
In the dark places of Humanity
We light a conflagration whose blind flame
Roars in the ears of them who butcher thee!

## XX

## EGYPT

Reliquary of Time's vicissitude,
Proof of persistent change, and prophecy,—
Rapt in thy myths and monuments I see
Visions that throng thy soundless solitude:
The pageant of a rumouring multitude,
The celebration and the mystery
Of occult and august Divinity
Sculptured in hieratic attitude;—
Till I discern across the shadow of years
The self-same tragic life and death of men,
The passion and the pathos and the tears,
The love and labour of humanity:
And know at last, tho' Time's abysmal sea
Divide us, yet we are not alien!

## XXI

In Time's cathedral Memory, like a ghost
Crouched in the narrow twilight of the nave,
Fumbles with thin pathetic hands to save
Relics of all things lived and loved and lost.
Life fares and feasts and Memory counts the cost
With unrelenting lips that dare confess
Life's secret failures, sins and loneliness
And life's exalted hopes, defiled and crossed.
Shalt thou endure, O Memory, and thy breath
Quicken the dead in thy dominion
And fire the peaks of thought we dared to climb,
When, in the swift relentless chill of death,
The crawling ice-floes of oblivion
Strangle thy passage thro' the seas of Time?

## XXII

O Memory, Mistress of the heart's despair,
Spirit of solitude and silent tears,
Pilgrim thro' twilights of departed years
Peopled with ghosts of all that once we were —
Pale vampire of the graves of Time, forbear!
Suffer the dead to rest! each ghost appears
Desolate in thy darkened atmospheres,
And joy is bitter and pain is perfect there.
Thine are the days gone irretrievably: —
Forbear, O Memory, for the heart will break!
Unless the Soul shall, peradventure, wake
Wonderfully, and, elate with mystic powers,
Rend as with lightnings of eternity
The graves of the interminable hours!

## XXIII

Days that have been and nevermore shall be,
Children of Time the sword of Time has slain,
Great hours of life when heart and soul were fain
Of Love's pure fire and Truth's eternity, —
Now, on the marches of that dim domain
And desolate sunset-land of Memory,
Ye rise like tortured ghosts and silently
Walk in the sombre twilights of the brain.
And we, like pilgrims on the path of Time
Who find no rest nor any dwelling-place,
We follow blindly in Life's retinue,
While, like the furies of Orestes' crime,
The spectral hosts of Memory on our trace
Innumerably assemble and pursue.

## XXIV

## QUESTIONS

Curious of life and love and death they stand
Outward along the shadowy verge of thought;
Rebels and deicides, they rise unsought
And spare no creed and yield to no command.
Even tho' at last we seem to understand,
Yet, when our eyes grow sphered to the new light,
We find them, outposts in the forward night,
Their eyes still restless with the same demand.
On all the heights and at the farthest goal
Set by the seers and christs of yesterday
They watch and wait and ask the onward way;
They storm the citadels of faith and youth,
And, gazing always for the stars of Truth,
Crowd in the glimmering windows of the Soul.

## XXV

## TO NIGHT

Thou canst console our sad humanity
With dreams of unimagined loveliness,
Or cast the shadow of forgetfulness
Over the haggard eyes of memory.
The deep unrest of man's infinity
Thou canst appease, for all thy stars confess
The living soul's imprisoned loneliness,
And heart finds liberty alone in thee.
Thou shalt complete us all who love and learn
The secret of thy silences, till we
Arise regenerate from the throes of strife,
And in thine all-receptive peace discern
The ineffable presence of eternity
Waiting forever at the gates of life.

## XXVI

Thus were our lives resolved! "The Dawn,"
we said,
"Is somewhere since the light is everywhere;
"Pinnacled in the universal air
"The tower of thought, we must believe,
shines red!"
By blind belief at all adventure led,
Thus were our lives resolved at last to
dare. —
Also we knew that up the endless stair
Socrates and some few were gone ahead.
But when at length we climbed into the light,
In wild alarm we saw how far it springs
Across death's void impassable atmos-
phere, —
Then, as our great resolve grew sick with fear,
We felt the freedom and the infinite
Ambition of the soul's expanded wings!

# LOVE

TO HER

## I

O SEA, nature's eternal palimpsest,
O stars that dawn, as memories one by one
Break on the dark void of oblivion,
O poem of love that fills the fragile nest,—
Whisper to me! Stir me to great unrest,
O passionate chaunt! Immortal antiphon,
Proud pæan of life that peals from sun to sun,
From flower to flower, from human breast to breast,
Sound in my soul! and thou, O heart, resound,
O lips, proclaim! for where her lips have clung
There must the lyric pulse beat tense and strong;
And where she lives with love must life abound
With music unimagined and unsung
To mend Truth's ravelled tapestry of song!

## II

She is the sea's star-smitten amethyst;
She is the light of long, incredible
Sunsets; she is the myth and miracle
Of love and Love is life's protagonist.
She is the soul and tragic heart of youth;
She is the dreams and raptures that foretell,
In legend, lyric, poem and parable,
The spacious and supreme vision of Truth.
In life's last desolation and distress
She is the touch that sets the Door ajar;
She is the peace, she is the passionless
Chill wonder of the Night's infinite breath;
She is the nameless light, the mystic star
In the illimitable skies of Death.

## III

Thunder, like thunder of the wind-scourged sea,
Of shouting multitudes and smitten lyres,
The perfumed smoke of sacrificial fires,
The palm, the pæan, and the ecstasy
That once confessed thy deep divinity
Are gone: the music fails, the rapture tires,—
But still heart burns, soul reaches, sense desires
For thee, only for thee and all for thee!
For thou art She, indubitably She,
The dear dream-woman, fatal and unknown,
Lilith and Helen and Eurydice;
And for thy sake man laughed at God's decree,
And brought the haughty towers of Ilium down,
And trod the pits of Hell because of thee.

## IV

Her soul is free from Time's fantastic trance:
No infidelity has vexed her eyes
Where burns the light of spiritual skies
Deep and unshaken by the winds of chance.
Her beauty gives a new significance
To life, and new desires and dignities,
And exaltation of new stars that rise
Over the dark ways of deliverance.
Love is her captive and her minister;
The golden shadow of the wings of love
Lies warm and tranquil on her naked breast:
She is the World's Desire, the shrine whereof
Life is the pilgrim, and in quest of her
All men have striven and suffered without rest!

V

Her days are like the white processional
Of sacred virgins who, transfused with bliss,
Moved round the altars at Hermopolis
With equal pace and measured interval.
For, like the God of Gods, possessed of all
The mighty meaning of the Mysteries,
She over-sees the endless theories
Of Time from summits clear and spiritual.
And I, beside her shrine, with bated breath,
Far in her eyes' profound horizons see
Ever the pulse, the ebb, the upward roll
Of light, — the day of life, the night of death,
Passing beneath the altars whence her soul
Watches in undisturbed divinity.

## VI

Her hair is hued like shadow where light is
Tragic and tense and tranquil, and her eyes
Burn in their depths the splendour of such skies
As sunset kindled over Naukratis.
It may be, when the walls and towers of This
Stood in magnificence and rang with cries
Of myriads in their flashing panoplies,
She shone with the Immortals!—God! we miss
The secret of life's lost divinity!
The days, like Sphinxes, one by one repeat
Their silent question and devour us!
How shall we learn the answer? How shall we
Scatheless endure the sacred flame that beat
And brake the desperate wings of Icarus?

## VII

I GIVE my whole life for her dwelling-place,
And all my days are mansions made for her,
And all my heart is like a harp-player
Singing with eyes insatiate of her face.
And she, for the same love's sake, in the trace
Of my dark journey follows everywhere,
And from the labour of truth and the despair
She can console me in her deep embrace.
For Love has made her body of his delight
And of his sacred frenzy, and his light
Is calm and ardent in her perfect eyes;
And Love has shared his faith and liberty
Between us, who are blent inseparably
In the communion of his mysteries.

## VIII

She moulded life, with hands subtle and wise,
Into the faultless fashion of a vase
Carved as of emerald or chrysoprase,
And bossed with mythic shapes of Paradise.
And brimmed it was with fire of sunset skies,
And deep sea-amethyst, and crystalline,
Calm starlight, all distilled into a wine
Clear and perturbed with splendour like her eyes.
And, as we slaked the thirst that gave no rest
By day or night, with solemn ecstasy
We knew such vineyards of the soul were pressed
To yield this very heart's-blood of our love,
That from our hands the cup, once drained thereof,
Must fall and shatter irretrievably.

## IX

That day of the innumerable days
Was like a gate set open secretly,
Where the swift sense of immortality
Drave us from Time's interminable ways.
Clear as a song's inviolable phrase,
Tender as sunset on a windless sea,
Our sudden hearts yielded ineffably,
Our eyes drank deep of Truth's eternal rays.
We saw how blind and aimless on and on
Time journeys, while the ripened harvests stand
Of Truth and Liberty on either hand;
And so we reaped and made the sacred bread
And poured the wine of Love's communion:
And there that day the starving soul was fed.

## X

In the shadow and glamour of the ways,
With a passion more mighty than we were,
With the strength of desire, we followed where
We found Love's light that leads and never stays.
And yet not thus, alone for what repays
The passion that is life for best and worst,
The desire that is hunger, that is thirst,
We wrought Love's labour of all our nights and days.
Nay, not alone the great hilarity
Of Love's brimmed cup and Life's high festival
Gave us good warrant of the quest: thereof
Were we resolved, because, for one and all
Of Love's true partisans, we seemed to see
The Truth alive in the deep heart of Love!

## XI

My lips were bruised against her lips, my eyes
Drowned in her eyes as in a star-lit sea;
My life sang brokenly to her, and she
Trembled with inarticulate replies.
I felt the rapture that in Paradise
Woke in their hearts, who, heedless of the cost,
Yielded to love; like waters tempest-tossed,
I felt her breast beneath me fall and rise.
And when at last our hands and eyes and lips
Severed, still, deep in life's undying heart,
We felt the birth of poems, the springs of song;
And saw, by winds of music borne along,
Our souls go forth on love's high seas, like ships
Making Truth's voyage without helm or chart.

## XII

Her breast is perfumed and profound as sleep;
Her fervent, mythic face is clear and fair
And pale as light; thro' all her sombre hair
The tragic splendours of the sunset creep.
And now for me her soul and senses keep
Incessant vigil, and because we share
The journey she will neither ask nor care
Whether the ways of love be smooth or steep.
Her eyes that watch for mine are starred and strange
As tho' there lightened on her inward sight
New vistas of the soul's unfettered range;
As tho' she saw, across the passive night,
On far horizons of the seas of change,
By Love's decree made manifest, the Light!

## XIII

We shared the silent faith and truth of
things!—
Her life seemed all in all to sing to me,
And mine replied in clear antiphony,
Wild as the music of wind-smitten strings.
Hers was the mood of one who subtly sings
In low, long sunsets by a windless sea;
Far in her languid eyes I seemed to see
The flash of unimagined lightenings.
And when against her breast I felt the core
Of life grow eager, while within her kiss
Trembled the broken rhythm of her blood,
I cried, "O slay thy worshippers, O God
"Of Love! for life must be for evermore
"After this joy a lesser joy than this!"

## XIV

My lips shut hard against her lyric throat;
Her hands were tense, her pulses tremulous:
Life burned and languished while I held her thus;
The feet of Time grew soundless and remote.
Glitters of Truth's consummate splendour smote
Our eyes with fire, and music, over us,
Like spheres of crystal clear and marvellous,
Fell thro' the faultless silence note by note.
When life and time drave us once more apart,
Life seemed a hollow shell of irised pearl
Filled with the song-pulse of her gorgeous heart;
And Time an eyeless ghost who, thro' the night
Where stars burn and dawn lifts and lightnings whirl,
Strove to constrain me from the paths of light.

## XV

She stood in the weird moonlight of a dream,
And in the light there was incredible
Silence, and on her lips no syllable
Of any speech, and in her eyes no gleam.
And by her still white feet the narrow stream
Paused in its flood, forgetful of the sea,
In shining silence, and it seemed to me
That silence quelled the stars and reigned supreme!
And terribly I felt there was no stir
But only silence in the heart of her,
And silence in her soul! — Then was I hurled
Back into life, and woke, and knew that she,
In moonlit silence, somewhere in the world
Waited alone and motionless for me.

## XVI

Her eyes are spacious as the starlight is;
Her brows are clear and pale as porphyry;
Her breasts are hueless as young ivory,
Save where they crimson, wounded by a kiss.
Her beauty wears the mood of Nemesis;
She is aloof from Time and Memory;
Her hands were shaped for love, and utterly
Her lip's deep curve was carved and stained for this.
I will alone, in silence, go to her
And feel beneath my kiss her pulses stir,
And in her hair the perfume of Love's breath;
And she will understand and bear with me
The joy of life, the pain, the mystery;
The thought, the fear, the loneliness of death.

## XVII

We strayed in Time's dream-haunted night
And watched the voiceless stars of thought
That thro' the warp of darkness wrought
Their frail and faithful threads of light.
But when life's passion blurred our sight,
We cried, "It dawns! Desire has brought
"That guide our souls have vainly sought
"For life, the way-worn eremite!"
Yet from the dazzled eyes of youth
The fire, subdued to sunset, cleared
At last, and we were left with truth:
For there, above the sunset's bars,
Still changeless and on high, appeared
The boundless night, the stedfast stars.

## XVIII

We loved the moon in strange sweet ways,
The moon that loved Endymion;
We loved the stars that one by one
Swelled thro' the sunset's golden haze.
We loved the skies of chrysoprase,
Pale violet and vermilion, —
The skies that soon must yield the sun;
We loved our proud, impassioned days.
We knew the gain of love is love,
We knew mere life is happiness,
We knew nor grief nor death can prove
That love is lost or life is less: —
We guessed the vaster scope thereof,
Closed in the cosmic consciousness.

## XIX

She said — "Heart breaks — yet, strangely,
into song!
"Then, when I leave thee, is there nothing
lost?
"God knows, in your account and mine, the
cost,
"Tho' all of life must pay and life be long,
"Is not too much! yet day by day the strong
"Monotony may blunt the edge of pain
"And leave us joyless, till we wake again
"To find our lives have done the Truth
much wrong. —
"Nay! for the present and ineffable flame
"That kindles at the core of life, shall last
"Beyond remembrance! Time shall never
tame
"The Truth, but like a pillared watch-fire
"It still shall cheer our pilgrimage and cast
"New light to guide the quest of soul's de-
sire!"

## XX

When she returns to me, when there is sound
And motion of her, and perfume of her,
And light and laughter of her eyes that were
The stars whither my homeless life was bound, —
When she returns and all my days resound
With Love's clear voice, who is her chorister,
And all my heart is shaken with the stir
Of Love's wide wings, and all my life is crowned
With her and her delight and her desire,
And all the night long, strong and swift as fire,
Her deep caress responds to my embrace, —
When she returns what shall I offer thee,
Upon thine altars in thy dwelling-place,
O God of Love, when she returns to me?

## XXI

What save her memory has Time left to me? —
The memory of the twilight of her hair,
The memory of her breast, profound and bare,
And of her mouth the dazzled memory!
For Memory, in the paradise that we
Seemed in Love's morning of the world to share,
Wanders alone, and, thro' the stagnant air,
Shows her small light in the obscurity.
And Memory too shall perish, as the stream
Of time flows ceaseless and resistless on! —
Yet, when again Love makes our twain souls one,
May we not glimpse, thro' life's dissolving dream,
Rays of imperishable light that seem
Dawn in the dark depths of oblivion.

## XXII

Remembrance is a desolate loneliness:
Alone we watch the light of life's lost days
Fade, strange and spectral, in the soundless ways
Of immemorial time, forever less.
The lustre of her living loveliness,
Soft as a song's most tense and tender phrase,
Seems like a windless sunset's golden haze,
Arched by the nightfall of forgetfulness.
Gone is the perfume of her naked breast,
Gone are her hands' caress, her lips' desire:
And in the House where once the feast was spread,
The chambers garnished for a nobler guest,
Amid the scattered ashes of Love's fire,
Pale Memory crouches, weeping o'er the dead.

## XXIII

I know in some far, fabled place,
Some land of old, immortal things,
The thrilled remembrance of our springs
Returns with spring to vex her peace.
Hearkening with pale impassioned face
As Life's faint fingers sweep the strings,
She hears an inward voice that sings
The Love too strong for Time and Space.
She knows, how much soever the loss
Of days unshared is loss indeed,
Yet stars shine up the endless sky,
That bear, from heart to heart across,
Still the foreverlasting need,
The love too greatly lived to die!

## XXIV

I THOUGHT she came in hushed and secret wise
And stood in silence close beside me here,
Mantled in some gold-glimmering atmosphere,
Deep as the light of sunset-splendid skies.
Then, with her breast's smooth curve, her lucent eyes,
Haunted with visions of the lonely soul,
Her high white face, she seemed the mythic goal
Of some fantastic, fabled enterprise.
Then, till my thirst was quenched, my hunger fed,
I seemed, with hands that clung and lips that kissed,
To hold and to possess her utterly;
While all her passion and beauty were to me
The lustral wine, the sacramental bread
Laid on Love's altar for Life's eucharist!

## XXV

Vainly the days return, in vain by night, —
Since thou art gone! — the stars stand choir-wise;
Gaunt as a moonlit road the future lies, —
Since thou hast left me! — to the verge of sight.
Since thou art gone there is no more delight
Of life, since thou hast left me! and the skies
Of love are dark, since now between our eyes
Kindles no more the imperishable light.
Thus are the Gods revenged for what we won
Of the celestial fire! The forward way,
Our way, as must be, goes superbly on,
Heedless of our disaster. Night and day
Flash up the abyss where one eternal ray
Falls from one stedfast star — perchance a sun!

## XXVI

She said — "I know the miracle is this,
"This pause and foretaste of eternity:
"Time was for us and time returns; but we
"To-day guess something, for life's chrysalis,
"In one transcendent metamorphosis,
"Shatters, and wings flash sky-ward, and we see
"Suddenly — stars! — and now no less can be
"Declared of life than what the secret is!
"Yet time returns, and death perchance is long
"And time eternal, — but the stars that throng
"Our skies of silence live beyond control
"Of death and time, for, guessing at the goal
"Of truth, we rise, thro' ringing spheres of song,
"And find them glittering stedfast in the soul!"

# DEATH

# TRUMBULL STICKNEY

OCTOBER 11TH

MCMIV

Καὶ μὴν ἔγωγε θαυμάσια ἔπαθον παραγενόμενος. οὔτε γὰρ ὡς θανάτῳ παρόντα με ἀνδρὸς ἐπιτηδείου ἔλεος εἰσῆει· εὐδαίμων γάρ μοι ἀνὴρ ἐφαίνετο, — ———, καὶ τοῦ τρόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἀδεῶς καὶ γενναίως ἐτελεύτα. — ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ ΦΑΙΔΩΝ.

## I

The House of Life has many mansions, where,
Like men dream-haunted in unquiet sleep,
We seek and strive and suffer, laugh and weep,
And fear the Truth, and mask the soul's despair.
And much in festival, and much in prayer
And sorrow and hysteric thanks-givings,
And more in labour for little and low things
Our life's brief interval is wasted there.
And only when magnificently some one
Of all the dreaming myriads, patiently
Shapes the great key and slants the secret door,—
As he departs we feel the blinding sun,
The pealing song, and know his soul is free,
Bound in the dream of life and death no more.

II

"He sought, believed, dared, found and bore
away
"The light. The deed, the deathless deed
was done!
"What mattered it that then Deukalion
"Was filled with wrath, resentment and
dismay?
"What tho' God's bird, relentless, day by day
"Tore his immortal heart, and God's high sun
"Blistered his eyes? — the man endured
and won!"
He said — and smiled in his tremendous way.
And then I knew how fiercely and alone
The Titan had withstood resistless things
And let the soul's accomplishment atone!
Had climbed blind pathways thro' the strangling night,
And, with the courage of his sufferings,
Had seized and kept, for life and death,
the Light!

## III

"NOTHING is spared," he said, "nothing is lost!
"Life, from the House of Death, returns again;
"There is salvation of the parcelled grain,
"And certain harvest where the seed is tossed.
"Life never dies, and life the Truth has cost,
"And love and lonely labours of the brain!—
"Therefore the light of Truth shall most remain
"After the night-fall and the night are crossed!"
And thus he stared with high expectancy
Into the terrible, blind vacancy,
Until, across the stricken field of Death,
His eyes seemed darkly to discern a goal,—
And we beheld the daybreak's boundless breath
Glimmer against the windows of his soul.

## IV

"That we, however least, however less
"Than Time's recorded heroes who have bled
"And burned and lived and died for Truth," he said,
"May still, in proof of all our lives profess,
"Join with their great companionship, to press
"In ways where none who are not free may tread,—
"We must endure to die! and, being dead,
"To live in death's transcendent loneliness!"
And thus thereafter we beheld him live,
Rapt in the faith of those who most believe,
Who most are curious and unsatisfied;
Till, to the summits and the silences,
Where all the Mighty stand with Socrates,
We saw him rise transfigured as he died!

V

He felt the blind, lost loneliness increase
As life compelled him to the final test.
He said: "The refuge of defeat is rest;
"A soul's dishonour is the price of peace!
"From star to star the flight shall never cease;
"The Truth, perforce, is long and last and best:
"Thro' life and death, with bruised, defenceless breast,
"We seek the sunrise of the soul's release!" —
And so he lived and almost died and died:
The night, the silence and the solitude
Left him magnificent and unsubdued; —
And we, who kept the vigil by his side,
Saw, when at last the door was opened wide,
Flash in his eyes the Dawn his soul pursued.

## VI

He said, "What death leaves derelict is dead:
"Thus may we circumscribe mortality!—
"Yet in the last release, when all is free
"To the free soul, who shall escape?" he said.
"Haste, lest we sleep, lest we be comforted,
"Lest we forget! for we must learn to be
"Visionaries of Truth's eternity,
"Star-gazers constant and unsatiated."
Thus we beheld him, stedfast and sublime,
Passing alone in eminent, strange ways
Of great adventure thro' the massive night;
Until at last, after prodigious days,
Outcast over the precipice of Time,
His eyes, triumphant, cried "The Light!
The Light!"

## VII

"We serve no God, nor in the retinue
"Of creed or faction are we crowned and fed!
"Therefore no less than our belief," he said,
"No less than all that we were faithful to,
"No less than capital and revenue
"Of all we won of Truth's inheritance,
"No less than our achieved significance,
"No less than all! in justice is our due!"
And then, before he left us, day by day,
And when his dumb, deserted body lay
Folded in death's impenetrable cloak,
By many a sign and proof no tongue can tell,
We knew the Justice that he dared invoke
Was swift and sure and indefectible!

## VIII

I WELL remember how one yesterday
Of all our lives' intense communion,
He said, "In Death's austere dominion
"Only the coin of Truth's device can pay
"The price of liberty! — What alien way
"Might chance direct us, when oblivion
"Sets us adrift from all we were and won? —
"Or take us from ourselves whither away? —
"Therefore must we, for our deliverance,
"Levy on life the toll of truth!" he cried.
And so he lived indeed — but when he died,
Beyond all proof I seemed to understand
That he, from Death's outstretched and friendly hand,
Received his ransom and recognizance.

## IX

"At least," he said, "we spent with Socrates
"Some memorable days, and in our youth
"Were curious and respectful of the Truth,
"Thrilled with perfections and discoveries.
"And with the everlasting mysteries
"We were irreverent and unsatisfied,—
"And so we are!" he said. And when he died
His eyes were deep with strange immensities.
And all his words came back to me again
Like stars after a storm. I saw the light
And trembled, for I knew the man had won
In solitude and darkness and great pain;—
But when he leaped headlong into the Night,
He met the dawn of an eternal Sun!

## X

He said: "We are the Great Adventurers,
"This is the Great Adventure: thus to be
"Alive and, on the universal sea
"Of being, lone yet dauntless mariners.
"In the rapt outlook of astronomers
"To rise thro' constellated gyres of thought;
"To fall with shattered pinions, overwrought
"With flight, like unrecorded Lucifers:—
"Thus to receive identity, and thus
"Return at last to the dark element,—
"This is the Great Adventure!" All of us,
Who saw his dead, deep-visioned eyes, could see,
After the Great Adventure, immanent,
Splendid and strange, the Great Discovery!

## XI

Above his heart the rose is red,
The rose above his head is white,
The crocus glows with golden light,
The Spring returns — and he is dead!
We hark in vain to hear his tread,
We reach to clasp his hand in vain;
Tho' life and love return again
We can no more be comforted.
With tearless eyes we kept stedfast
His vigil we were sworn to keep:
But, when he left us, and at last
We saw him pass beyond the Door,
And knew he could return no more,
We wept aloud as children weep.

## XII

We knew he lived alone with loneliness
Day after day. We did what men could do:
Men could do nothing, — or, at most, a few
Moments persuade him to forgetfulness.
We often smiled — perhaps in sheer excess,
Perhaps because we found him smiling too.
We never wept, and he divinely knew
The love that gave us strength, nevertheless.
In solitude as tho' in dungeon walls
His soul was held sequestered and confined.
We always wondered how it was he bore
The tense intolerable intervals
Wherein he waited, stedfast, breathless, blind,
To hear the hand of Death unlock the door.

## XIII

In silence, solitude and stern surmise
His faith was tried and proved commensurate
With life and death. The stone-blind eyes of Fate
Perpetually stared into his eyes,
Yet to the hazard of the enterprise
He brought his soul, expectant and elate,
And challenged, like a champion at the Gate,
Death's undissuadable austerities.
And thus, full-armed in all that Truth reprieves
From dissolution, he beheld the breath
Of daybreak flush his thought's exalted ways,
While, like Dodona's sad, prophetic leaves,
Round him the scant, supreme, momentous days
Trembled and murmured in the wind of Death.

## XIV

At last the light leaped in his patient eyes!
And he, transfigured by the breathless sense
Of an eventual magnificence,
At last forbore life's small felicities.
Then, as beneath Death's starred and silent skies
His life's large sunset lingered, calm and tense,
His faith revealed, in days of dark suspense,
Proof of the soul's immortal destinies.
Yet, when at last the heights he dared to climb
Sphered him in solitudes no tongue can tell,
Then, tho' we knew not all our love could share
With him the last adventure, as he fell
We leaned over the parapets of Time
And saw strange splendours in the abysmal air!

## XV

With life and lips he said tremendous things!
Yet, when he died, I most recalled the smile
Which day by day he gave us to beguile
The crude disaster of our sufferings.
He knew what we believed or half-believed:
How from the Lakes of Hell the fabled springs
Rise to his lips who most divinely sings,
Who, tried in truth, has most superbly lived.
Therefore his calm lips smiled because he stood,
And we beheld him stand, in loneliness,
Lost in the shadow of Eternity;
Therefore at last his eyes revealed the mood,
Thro' mortal passion and sublime distress,
Of one reborn into divinity!

## XVI

Times were when, reeling on his eminence,
He seemed to doubt the event:—if, after all,
His strength could well endure what must befall—
And hold his breath in anguish and suspense.
And we, who watched with every fibre tense,
There, so to speak, within his sight and call,
At every such momentous interval,
Measured the man's surpassing excellence.
And when, crouched silent by the silent gate,
We saw him pass within, alone with Fate,
We seemed to hear, as thro' the closing door,
The shouting of star-choirs, and to see
The sunrise flash against his brows that wore
The glory and the gold of victory!

## XVII

I saw that day in his dead eyes
The light that suffers no eclipse,
I felt the chill on his dead lips
Of shoreless seas and starlit skies.
I knew he lives indeed who dies
A champion in the lists of Truth,
I knew the days of all his youth
Were tournaments and victories!
And yet once more heart-brokenly
I kissed his lips and clasped his hand
And suffered darkly, humanly;
Till, there beside his corpse and me,
I almost seemed to see him stand,
Dead — and alive, triumphant, free!

## XVIII

THERE moved a Presence always by his side,
With eyes of pleasure and passion and wild tears,
And on her lips the murmur of many years,
And in her hair the chaplets of a bride;
And with him, hour by hour, came one beside,
Scatheless of Time and Time's vicissitude,
Whose lips, perforce of endless solitude,
Were silent and whose eyes were blind and wide.
But when he died came One who wore a wreath
Of star-light, and with fingers calm and bland
Smoothed from his brows the trace of mortal pain;
And of the two who stood on either hand,
"This one is Life," he said, "and this is Death,
"And I am Love and Lord over these twain!"

## XIX

Because for some tremendous cause he chose
To meet his life's supreme catastrophe
In silence, and with grave serenity
To bear alone the last, remorseless woes,
We turned the tide of dreadful tears that rose
High on the shores of Life, resolved to be
True to his tragic, tense tranquillity;
And day by day we often smiled — God knows!
But, when at last he died and we were left
Utterly, irretrievably bereft,
Blear-eyed with vigil by the Great Abyss,
We found no tears because the man was dead, —
But there beside his corpse! — God knows — instead
We shared with him unutterable bliss!

## XX

All thro' the night most strange it was to see,
Vigilant of him as he lay there, dead,
The eyes of Love singing beside his bed,
Clear as the dawn-stars singing over-sea.
At last Love turned his eyes to mine, and said,
"Love is the Lord of Life, and I am he!
"Walk in my ways and thy despair shall be
"A dungeon whence the captive soul has fled!"
Then I beheld how all unscathed he passed,
With high, calm face and eyes unterrified,
The destined Door of all that perisheth;
So, as I caught his hand and held it fast,
"Whither thou goest I will go!" I cried,
"O Lord of Life, O Lord and Life of Death!"

## XXI

The stately silence, the perpetual peace
Of death's inscrutable, divine event
Lay on his body like a sacrament,
In calm assurance of the soul's release.
Gone forth on the great ways that never cease
With all the Mighty and Magnificent
Whose souls like his were strangers to content,
We knew he voyaged for Truth's Golden Fleece.
And we, who, day by day and hand in hand,
Had fared with him in close community
Of high endeavour to the treacherous sand
Edging Life's continent, we turned our eyes
Seaward, and there, far forth, we seemed to see,
Full-sailed and outward-bound, his Argosies!

## XXII

We said no word of all men use to say,
But, when the childish jargon of the priest
And all the stale formalities had ceased,
We laid him in the earth and went away.
Mysteriously thereafter all that day
We felt, like adepts at a sacred feast,
Rapt in austere rejoicing, and released
From all dark bounds of life's dim-vistaed way.
And all that night about me in the gloom
I felt great consummations and the stir
Of high events, and in the dawn's first breath
I saw a presence by the empty tomb,
Who said, "I am the Great Deliverer!
"I am the Life!"—I looked, and it was Death!

## XXIII

We bore the chill, persistent dread
  Here in the long, tree-shaded way;
  And here the things we could not say
  Were more, I know, than man has said.
These are the paths that felt his tread,
  This is the bench where sunset lay
  So large and tranquil day by day, —
  And I return, and he is dead!
And I must bear to feel the breath
  Of desolation thrill and swell
  My broken heart's discordant strings! —
While he, who bore life's utmost things, —
  In the immensity of Death,
  With him it is not less than well!

## XXIV

## DAYS

Still on his grave, relentless, one by one,
They fall as fell the mystic, Sibylline,
Sad leaves, and still the Meaning's secret sign
Dies undeciphered with each dying sun.
How shall the burning heart of Truth be won?
Whence shall the light of revelation shine?
When shall the mind's discernment grow divine?
Where shall the soul's immortal deeds be done? —
What were the incommunicable things
Whereof his dying eyes were undismayed?
What were the words that stirred his strangling breath? —
Sharply the Night's impenetrable wings
Covered his eyes, and on his lips was laid
The inveterate taciturnity of Death!

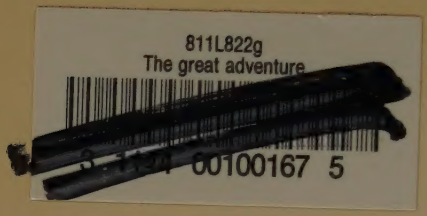
## XXV

O Memory, Lord of broken and broadcast
Fragments of life, like scattered Cyclades
Set in the dark, illimitable seas
Of Time, still twilight-silvered and stedfast: —
Wayfarer in the devastated past,
Ghoul of the great necropolis of Time,
Where Life and Death and all things, in the lime
Of long oblivion, are consumed at last: —
Salvage the shattered drift, the tempest-tossed
Derelicts of his shipwrecked life's dead days!
Treasure of his loved voice an echoed phrase!
And set, O Memory, in thy stagnant skies
The Dawn reflected in his dying eyes,
Herald of victory when all was lost!

## XXVI

It is not that we loved him, as in sooth
Beyond all words we loved and love him still;
It is not that he seemed so to fulfil
Ineffably the very spirit of Truth;
It is not, day by day, in the uncouth
Brutality of death, his calm control,
Courage and tenderness of heart and soul;
It is not pity even of his mere youth; —
God knows these were alone sufficient cause!
Yet it is not for all these things that we
Now keep sure faith with things transcendent, true
And untransmissible: — it is because,
Even in the presence of the Mystery,
He knew! — it is because we knew he knew!

The Riverside Press
*Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.*
*Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.*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